

More Than Enough by Val-Creative

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Summary: El frowns to herself and stubbornly pulls the bed-sheet over her head, adjusting her eye-holes. The only thing -stupid- is assuming the bad men would see her in her Halloween costume — and they won't. It's one night. Hopper won't even know she left. / Season 2. Alternative Canon. Mileven. Oneshot.

More Than Enough

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Halfway happy isn't enough. It's just not.

El frowns to herself and stubbornly pulls the bed-sheet over her head, adjusting her eye-holes. The only thing *stupid* is assuming the bad men would see her in her Halloween costume — and they *won't*.

It's one night. Hopper won't even know she left.

As soon as she hears the tires crunch onto gravel, fading into the distance, El runs out to the front rug. She manages to not trip over her ghost-sheet, yanking on her already tied sneakers, opening the door.

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The woods begin to darken around her, as El steps around roots and fallen branches.

Pretty soon, she can hear the laughter of other kids. Goblins and witches parading around with other adults, passing under the streetlights, along with devils and pumpkins and skeletons. Another smaller ghost, with a more patterned and lilac sheet, waves towards her enthusiastically.

El waves back under her sheet, though much more timid.

With her free hand, she clutches onto her empty pillow-sack. El knows she's supposed to get candy for tonight only, and without having to pay any money, but not exactly *how* to ask for it...

El gasps out, colliding abruptly into another trick-or-treater also not paying attention to where he's going.

"Oh! I'm sorry!" The boy shouts, looking down where she landed on her bottom, rubbing herself. "Are you hurt?" She could recognize Mike's voice out of a thousand others, and without her permission, El feels her eyes welling with hot, stingy tears. *Mike* — he's here, with her, *talking* to her, finally *seeing* her.

Trembling all over, El rises to her feet, adjusting her ghost-sheet once more. Mike, Mike, *Mike*, his name burns on her lips and tongue, on the surface of her face, but she refuses to say it.

To break *that* rule.

He doesn't seem to know who is under the sheet anyway. Mike peers towards the bigger, ranch-style house decorated in cobwebs and gigantic fuzzy spiders. "You wanna go first to the door?"

El says nothing, standing there awkwardly, with a lump in her throat.

He shrugs and races for the porch.

A little old woman in a black, garland-topped hat answers the front door, holding out a bowl of candy. She can hear Mike talking, but he points to her for a moment. *What is he doing*—El wonders, fiddling her hands.

Mike rejoins her on the sidewalk, motioning for her to open her pillow-sack, dropping in an extra piece of candy. "You don't have to be shy," he tells her, patting his jumpsuit and meeting their brown eyes. Mike places the back of his knuckles against his cheek, moving his head downwards as he speaks.

El's eyes widen.

Sign language.

For a long time, she had been "nonverbal" — instead of punishing her for it like Papa would, Hopper taught her American Sign Language, sometimes losing his patience and sometimes El did too. But mostly the signs had been "please" and "thank you" and memorizing the whole alphabet. She could at least do that much.

Mike presses his hands together, crooking his forefingers on top of

each other, signing his next sentence. "Is this your first time trick or treating?" he says aloud, pressing his right finger to his cheek and wiggling it.

El nods under her ghost-sheet, signing back.

Y-E-S.

The last letter ends with her fist exposed to him, and her thumb lying over her middle knuckle. Mike begins to smile with all of his teeth. El's heart pounds faster, glimpsing how his freckles darken against his pale skin.

"Can you read lips too?" he asks, waiting for her to slowly sign yes again. Mike leads the way towards more houses glowing electric green and purple, telling her how his baby sister Holly was mostly deaf. He taught himself to sign for her and so did Nancy, so they could talk to Holly as she grows up.

"Do you live around here?"

El hesitates, before shaking her head wildly under her ghost-sheet.

"Shouldn't you tell your mom and dad where you are?" Mike says, furrowing his brows. He gazes at her, stepping out of the way for a toddler and his parent. "Did you sneak out because they're too busy?"

Y-E-S.

"That sucks. Well, at least I got to meet you!" Mike beams, twisting his heavy pillow-sack. "You're pretty cool!" El goes flustered, heat rising to her face, the lump in her throat disappearing. Before she can sign out *thank you*, Mike yells for her to follow, joining a bunch of other kids for the nearest doorstep.

Once she's there, Mike shows her how to knock on the door with everyone else, to hold out her bag and accept a treat. It's difficult for him to sign instructions while doing it, but she's... *amazed* he would even try.

"Yeah, I was with my friends earlier. We all walked here together." Mike then huffs. "They're too busy with the new kid. Halloween is

kinda ruined," he admits moodily. El frowns, squinting her eyes. "I just want my old friend, you know? I don't need a new one. She was the *best*." Mike's hand touches his chin for *best*, sliding away, ending with a faint thumbs-up. "She's gone now, but... I miss her. I don't think I ever won't miss her."

El doesn't think about it, grabbing Mike's shoulder for his attention.

S-O-R-R-Y.

Her fingers visibly quaking and stumbling over the letters.

"It's not your fault," Mike says softly, turning confused.

Sprinting through a lawn, a group of kids dressed in identical jumpsuits yell for Mike. El recognizes Lucas and Dustin's faces first.

Mike brightens up, glancing between them and her. "Hey, you wanna meet my friends?" he says, hooking his fingers together twice for *friends*.

She panics, signing *no* while tapping two fingers together harshly on her thumb.

Mike's expression falls.

El inhales sharply, lunging and hugging him tightly against her. It's several seconds at the most, but he's *warm* and real. She can feel herself *breaking* under the pressure. Mike doesn't say anything — he freezes up in place and stares, unmoving as she runs away, lifting up her ghost-sheet from her sneakers.

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Back within the woods, El rips off her costume, wheezing for air and sobbing.

Mike.

They were together, *together*, and she could reach out and touch him

without an illusion in her mind. El's mouth twitches into a little, forlorn smile, despite her tears and heavy, whimpering breathing.

She can wait. She can try to.

But not forever.

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*Stranger Things isn't mine. I KNOW IT'S BEEN DONE but I had a very specific idea in mind for El sneaking out for trick or treating on Halloween. And it was mostly Mike and El meeting up but never actually talking because obviously Mike would recognize her. I wanna give the dedication to **glove23** (FFN and AO3) and **theschubita** (AO3 and Tumblr) who I discussed the idea with in length and they gave me loads of encouragement! Thank you, lovelies! And I hope everyone else caught some feels and enjoyed this! Comments/thoughts are so so appreciated thank you! Has anyone watched Beyond Stranger Things yet?*